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ABSTRACT

Demographic projections indicate that the classrooms of the future will be quite different from those of the past because of the increasing language and ethnic diversity found among the American student population. As a result, there has been increasing concern about preparing monocultural teachers for multicultural classrooms. Teacher education literature provides a limited framework for designing courses to prepare teachers for a classroom student culture different from their own. One of the most valuable avenues available to the preservice teacher who attempts to enter and understand a different culture is the avenue of reading literature. Exposure to children's literature that includes an array of cultural settings can help preservice teachers develop an understanding and appreciation of the diversity of cultures both within and outside the United States. Exposure to this literature will also help them develop a repertoire of readings which they can incorporate into their teaching practices. In a preservice course at Florida State University, children's literature was used to prepare White preservice student teachers to work with African American students in Leon County, Florida. This paper discusses selection of appropriate literature and gives specific examples of children's books and their use in the college course. Two categories of books are discussed: socially conscious books, which are written by White or African American authors for White audiences to acquaint readers with the African American condition; and culturally conscious books, which are written by African American authors who portray the uniqueness of being African American from the author's own perspective. (IAH)

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DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM: EXPERIENCES FOR THE MONOCULTURAL PRESERVICE TEACHER

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Where are our teachers coming from, and what kinds of classrooms are they entering? The following demographic characterization from Profiles Of Preservice Teacher Education (Howey & Zimpher, 1989) answers this intriguing and important question:

> Feistritzer (1983) characterized the typical teacher as a woman approaching her fortieth birthday, married, the mother of two, and white. In 1984, Howey profiled the demography of the current teaching population as 91 percent white, 6 percent black, and 1.7 Hispanic. Yarger, et al. (1977) portrayed the current teacher as provincial, coming from a small city or rural community, and monolingual. In contrast, Haberman (1983) characterized our pupil population as one out of every six students being poor and one out of every four being a minority. By 2000, most schools will have substantial minority, low income, and handicapped populations. Spanish speaking students will predominate public education in Texas and New Mexico, as will Asiatics and Haitians in California, New York, and Florida. By the turn of the century, every city in excess of 500,000 will have what Hodgkinson (1988) called a "minority majority" population of poor and ethnically diverse students (p. 233).

The classrooms that our future teachers will be entering will be very different from the classrooms they inhabited as children. With this projection, preparing the monocultural teacher for the multicultural classroom has been a growing concern for teacher educators. This concern, however, has yet to make its way into the literature on teacher education, for few articles have been published reflecting the preparation of teachers for culturally diverse classrooms. Although few in number, these articles offer valuable suggestions and methods for multicultural teacher education coursework.

What should be the philosophy behind and content of such coursework? Santos (1986) asserts that we must prepare teachers to value and act on the concepts, goals, and ideals of multiculturalism even though our society and its institutions continue to value and reward monoculturalism. However it must first be realized that "developing sensitivity to cultural pluralism is not just another subject that college students can master through memorization of the facts (p. 21)." The college professor must enter the affective domain. Thus far, however, educational programs have neglected the affective domain as it is difficult to measure or evaluate.

Santos suggests that teacher educators enter the affective domain by providing meaningful activities along a continuum in which the learners' experiences move along three levels: awareness, response, and valuing. In the awareness level, the learner explores the issues, concerns, and points of view of diversified groups. In the response level, the learner will take positive actions to expand knowledge. Finally, through valuing, the learner will demonstrate a positive attitude and commitment

to the promotion of intercultural understanding. Table 1, adapted from Santos (1986), represents some suggested activities at each level.

Table 1

Suggested Activities For A Multicultural Teacher Education Course

AWARENESS	RESPONSE	VALUING
* Diary of minority issues and points of view by watching minority television shows and reading minority publications	* Attend a church service of another linguistic, religious or racial group	* Tutor a non-English speaking child or adult
* Students attend seminars, conferences, and workshops dealing with any relevant theme or issue	* Learn to cook a dish, sing, dance, etc. from a culture different from their own	* Submit editorial articles to local newspapers
*Guest speakers from community representing diverse points of view about issues affecting cultural groups.	* Visit schools in urban areas with a high density minority population	* Become involved in voter registration campaigns.
* Conduct interviews with parents of school age children representing varied cultural backgrounds	* Evaluate curricula materials for evidence of racism, sexism, or colonialism	* Keep legislators informed about minority points of view
* Visiting and interviewing officers and community leaders from minority organizations	* Join a minority organization in a local community	* Host a seminar concerning a "hot issue"

These suggested activities serve as good starting points for the design of a college course for future teachers. However, Santos did not take into account teacher preparation institutions that are in monocultural settings. Fuller and Ahler (1987) describe their program which involved such an institution. Their course was designed with the following four goals in mind: "(1) to develop personal identifications with members of culturally diverse groups; (2) to develop greater sensitivity for other cultures; (3) to help preservice teachers define and appreciate their own culture; and (4) to help them gain exposure to multicultural teaching techniques" (p. 34).

The course exposed students to anthropological and

educational concepts as well as content knowledge about the following cultural groups: Native Americans, Hispanics, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Jewish Americans. Because their university is located in a monocultural community, direct contact with diverse cultures was difficult. Therefore, classes from three culturally diverse schools (Arizona-Hispanic, Chicago-African-American, and Fort Berthold Reservation-Native American) were invited to help prepare the future teachers enrolled in this course.

Early in the semester, each university student was assigned a "pen-pal" elementary student from one of the three culturally diverse schools. Teachers sent pictures of their students, schools, and communities. The university students were assigned various readings that assisted them in gathering background information to help acquaint them with their "adopted" student and culture. In addition, each student participated in at least three of the following activities:

1. Bulletin boards displaying materials received from field schools.

2. Sending packets of materials from North Dakota to field schools.

3. Attending a breakfast meeting with visiting field teachers.

4. Taking visiting teachers on a campus and community tour.

5. Taking part in a planning session of future multicultural activities.

6. Attending panel discussions by visiting teachers.

7. Taking pictures of University of North Dakota students, campus, and community to share with field students.

This project was reported to be successful by all participants. Future teachers were ready for more in-depth examination of multicultural issues and some graduated to teach in the cultural setting that was studied.

These two described courses provide the limited framework found in the literature describing the preparation of teachers for a classroom student culture different from their cultural upbringing. Although they offer valuable philosophies and activities, they have overlooked perhaps the most valuable avenue available to the preservice teacher to enter and understand a different culture. That avenue is the reading of literature.

Recently, the power of literature and its use in college courses has been discovered by college professors in fields other

than education. Perhaps most notable is the work of Harvard Psychiatry and Medical Humanities professor, Robert Coles. In The Call Of Stories: Teaching And The Moral Imagination, Coles (1989) describes his course entitled Literature and Medicine. The course encompasses the reading and discussion of novels, stories, and poems that relate to the medical profession. Works authored by doctors such as Williams, Chekhov, and Percy, as well as the works of others including Tolstoy, Eliot, O'Connor, and Plath explore such topics as the subjectivity of madness, the evocation of illness, the description of a hospital scene, approaching death, pain, fatal illness, and losing a loved one or patient.

His book is a testimony by both his students and himself of the power of literature. Not only do his students come to understand their patients through stories, but they come to better understand themselves both as doctors and as journeyers through life. Cole states his gratitude to poets "who help us stop and listen, hear ourselves walking toward those ward beds, toward our own final bed" (p. 99).

Literature and Law, offered by Lawrence A. Frolick, University of Pittsburgh, is yet another example of the value literature can play in a college course. Literature and Law is described as follows: "The class is intended to remind law students that law involves balancing values in a society and not simply memorizing statutes. By reading a sample of novels, plays, and short stories -- mostly by American authors -- the class analyzes human values and determines how those values translate into legal rules. The principles of property, contract, and criminal law are examined through readings" (Blum, 1989, p. A12). Literature is used in this course to breed an understanding of "how law is really the embodiment of our fundamental human needs and desires" (p. A11).

Both Coles and Frolick developed their respective courses centered on the notion that literature can help us better understand others and society. Perhaps Coles captured the call of stories best by his statement, "only through stories can you fully enter another's life." It is through stories that pre-service teachers can enter the lives of multicultural students. The time is ripe for a course titled, "Literature And Education."

Such a course is alluded to by Kneller (1985) in his argument that many institutions could enhance their all-university commitment to teacher preparation by having faculty in arts and sciences together with faculty in teacher education jointly design courses in different core disciplines. One example being literature:

> Under any consideration I still would make room for courses in literature and education. The neglect of literature by educationists is incomprehensible. Like the historian, the philosopher, and others in humane studies, the creative writer gives knowledge of how to live. The writer embodies

> knowledge of human beings and education in a tale that moves our imagination and emotions as well as our intellect. Writers make us see and feel what it is like to educate and be educated in different times and places. Charles Dickens, for example, portrays twenty-odd schools and refers to several more. He also depicts a dozen types of coercion in child training. In Women In Love, D. H. Lawrence, a former elementary school teacher, gives us a riveting portrayal of a lesson seen by a school inspector. Especially since World War II, education has become the central theme and setting of many novels. For portraying teaching, learning, classroom interactions, and the joys and miseries of childhood and adolescence, we can do no better than study such works as Muriel Spark's The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, John Horne Brown's Lucifer With A Match, Frances Patton's Good Morning, Miss Dove, Herman Wauk's Margorie Morningstar, and many others I could name (p. 19).

The use of literature in college courses is not a novel idea. The changing times call for a way to prepare teachers for multicultural students. As demonstrated by Cole and Frolik, and suggested by Kneller, literature can lead the way.

The question remains as to what type of literature and how to best select pieces which can accomplish this goal. It would appear that an obvious choice of study for the future educators of elementary age children would be children's literature.

In addition to the course suggestions made by Santos, Fuller, and Ahler, through children's literature, the preservice teacher can be exposed to an array of cultural settings. Literature can help the preservice teacher develop an understanding and appreciation for the diversity of cultures not only outside of, but within this country. In addition, these preservice teachers will develop a repertoire of readings they can incorporate into their teaching practices. The same books chosen to help the preservice teacher understand the cultures of the students they will teach, will in turn be used with children to prepare them for the world in which they will live, as described by Bergen (1981):

> Educational institutions exist to prepare young people for the future. That future will be in a culturally-pluralistic nation and a rapidly shrinking world. Therefore, educators have an obligation to develop culturally literate citizens of the future, citizens with a thorough understanding of culture and ethnicity in our society and in our world (p. 1).

Part II of this paper will describe the use of children's literature to prepare preservice teachers for one specific culture: the African-American classroom. Considerations for selection of appropriate literature will be discussed, followed by specific examples of children's books and their use in the college course. This description serves merely as a starting point for the preservice teacher's exposure to many different

cultures through literature.

Part II

The need to prepare preservice teachers for different cultural settings first became apparent during my supervision of four student teachers at Florida State University. The growing state of Florida becomes a testimony for the needs of future teachers to work in culturally diverse schools. Of new births occurring between 1980 and 1989, approximately one third were non-white. More dramatic is the record of new births in Leon County, where Florida State University is located; approximately one half of new births were non-white (Table 2).

* *

Table 2
Number of New Births 1980 - 1989

	White	Non-white
Florida	1,052,554	368,462
Leon County	14,065	7,477

Taken from Bureau Of Economic And Business Research: Florida Estimates of Population '89. College of Business Administration: University of Florida.

* *

The students under my supervision were white females all raised in middle to upper-middle class homes. Their student teaching placements were in a school located in a low socio-economic area with a student population of African-Americans exclusively. They entered their schools uneasy and frightened. They experienced a type of "culture shock." As a result, some experienced difficult discipline problems. These experiences were not unexpected by the university as many preservice teachers are assigned to schools throughout their field placements that are quite different from their cultural backgrounds, often resulting in problems similar to those experienced by my student teachers.

The population of the schools in Leon County, where the majority of FSU preservice teachers intern is exhibited in Figure 1 (Sheruman & Floyd, 1989).

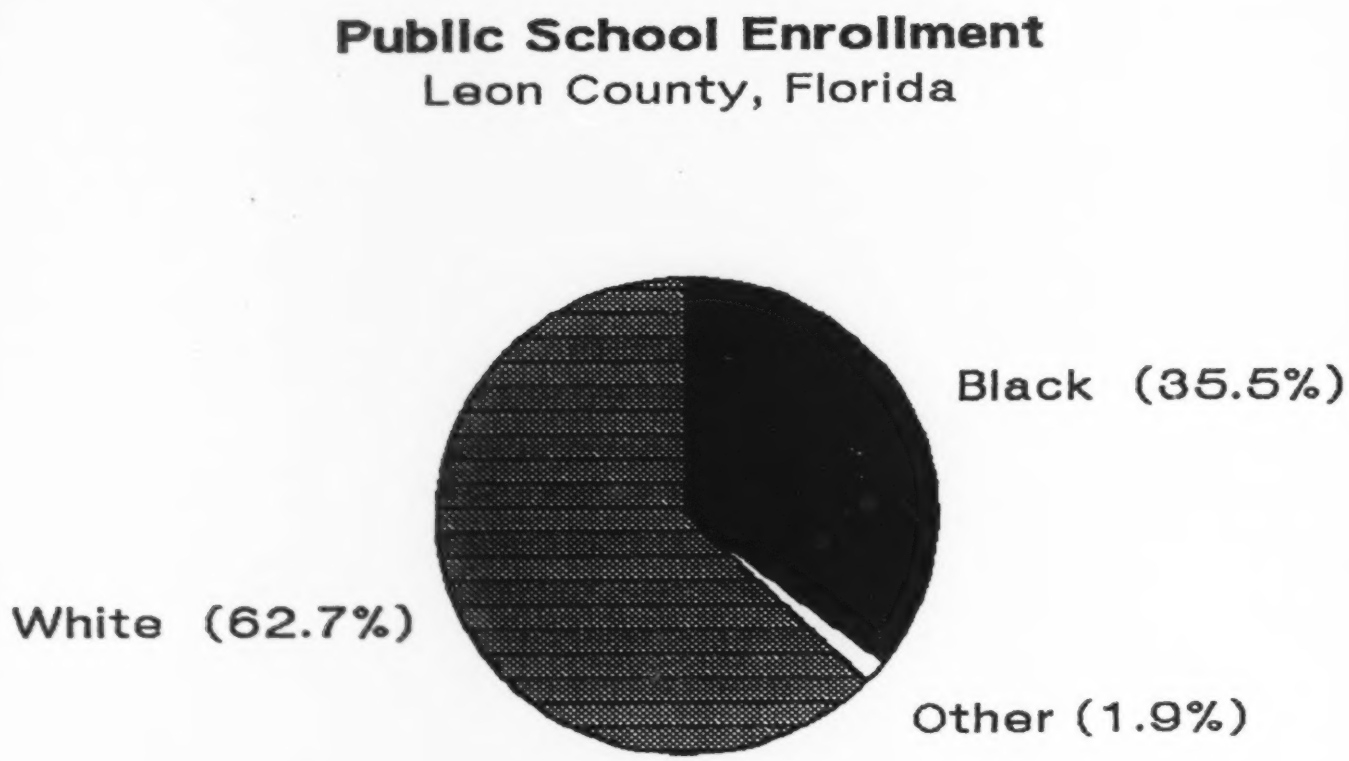

Figure 1. Population of the schools, Leon County, Florida.

In contrast to the large African-American student membership in Leon County, over 90% of Florida State's preservice teachers placed in Leon County schools for student teaching are white, and often ignorant of and ill prepared to teach students from cultures other than their own. With these statistics in mind, exposure to the African-American experience in children's literature could help bridge the gap between these monocultural preservice teachers, and the African-American children they will teach.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect for the development of such a course for the preservice teacher would be the selection of readings. Sims (1982) in Shadow And Substance: Afro-American Experience in Contemporary Children's Fiction offers suggestions for classroom teachers, librarians, and teacher-educators to make better selections of literature for and about African-Americans. Two questions raised by Sims would also be appropriate concerns in the selection of readings for preservice teacher coursework.

In selecting and teaching African-American literature, the teacher educator must first ask, "To whom are books about African-Americans primarily addressed?" Sims asserts that often these books are intended for white children and distort or ignore the cultural experience unique to African-Americans. If preservice teachers read only this material, they will not gain an understanding of the African-American experience. Yet preservice teachers may gain insights from exposure to some of this literature, as these are products of black authors writing for white audiences to let them know their condition, and white authors writing about blacks for white children. Such books are termed by Sims as "Social Conscious Books." Perhaps such books would be a good starting point for preservice teachers to review their knowledge of the African-American experience including the literature they were exposed to as children.

A second question for consideration is, "Who are the books written by?" Certainly if one believes that authors write from their own experiences and point of view, then white writers can bring only a limited perspective to the African-American culture. Sims asserts that white writers often produce "Melting Pot Books" presenting black children as not being different from traditional white values. Often one can only tell a character is black from the illustrations. Therefore, a good number of selected reading for the preservice teacher should be authored by the African-American coming from the category Sims refers to as "Culturally Conscious Books." These books offer the uniqueness of being African-American from that perspective.

An outstanding choice to begin a course for cultural awareness (African-American or other) through children's literature would be Peter Spier's People (1980). This picture book simply but eloquently describes the great variety found between people and cultures. The underlying message is that we all can share our earth harmoniously. Spier writes: "It is very

strange: Some people even hate others because they are unlike themselves. Because they are different. They forget that they too would seem different if they could only see themselves through other people's eyes." The cultural awareness course can build upon this theme, being described as a journey through literature so the preservice teacher can understand cultural difference, and see the world through other people's eyes.

A recent book, Ann Turner's Nettie's Trip South, (1987) would follow up on this theme in the African-American culture exploration. The story, inspired by the diary entry of Turner's great-grandmother, a committed abolitionist, speaks of the young girl's trip South in 1859 where she witnessed a slave auction. Nettie writes to her friend, "Addie, I can't get this out of my thoughts: If we slipped into a black skin like a tight coat, everything would change" (p. 22). This book provides the basis for a discussion of the history of African-Americans, including slavery and how their history has repercussions for the African-American today. In addition, preservice teachers can examine their beliefs, understandings, and perhaps misconceptions of the past and present day African-American experience, as Nettie did on her trip South:

> Addie, I was so worried I was almost sick. Julia told me slaves are thought to be three- fifths of a person. It's in the Constitution. I'd never seen a slave and wondered, What were they missing? Was it an arm, a leg, a foot, or something inside? I couldn't ask Lockwood, he has such a sharp tongue, and Julia was busy being grown-up, so I kept my worry to myself all the way south on the train, across Chesapeake Bay. I looked and looked at black people, but I could not see what was missing (p. 5-6).

Nettie's Trip South would fit into Sim's social conscious books. Readings in this category would enable the preservice teachers to gain an understanding of what white and black authors think white children should know about their condition, and how this is reflected in the times the books were written. Topics discussed in this category include school desegregation, and how to behave when blacks move into a white neighborhood.

Sims states that the social conscious books, mainly written in the late sixties, were timely oversimplifications of social issues and "deserve a long and relatively undisturbed rest on the library shelves (p. 31)." Perhaps their retirement is appropriate for children, but not for the preservice teacher to study. If the preservice teacher is to gain an understanding of a culture through literature, the preservice teacher must also understand that not all portrayals are culturally insightful or accurate. In addition, the majority of social conscious books were most probably the same literature today's white preservice teachers read as children. A few social conscious selections can help the preservice teacher analyze their childhood exposure to the African-American experience, and build the foundation for readings from culturally conscious fiction.

Selections from this category should constitute the majority of reading selections for the preservice teacher for it is these books that best reflect the social and cultural traditions associated with growing up African-American in the United States. The topics of these books encompasses African heritage and traditions, common everyday experiences, surviving racism and discrimination, living in the city, friendship, peer, and family relationships, and growing up and finding oneself.

A suggested reading from this category is Virginia Hamilton's Zeely (1967). Zeely is the summer adventure of eleven year old Elizabeth Perry. Elizabeth enjoys imagining, which results in her taking on the name "Geeder," and her brother "Toeboy" during the summer they spend together at Uncle Ross' house. A portrait of a Watusi queen in a magazine causes Geeder to fantasize that Zeely Taber is also a Watusi queen. Through her discussion with Zeely, she comes to realize the importance of being herself, and holding on to dreams. She concludes that Zeely really is a queen because of her pride, dignity, and free spirit.

In Zeely, African-American dreams and heritage are "woven into the fabric of the story" (Sims, 1982, p. 87). The preservice teacher can dissect and discuss the transmissions of culture Hamilton weaves into her work. One excerpt for discussion taken from Zeely occurs when Toeboy asks Uncle Ross about night travelers:

> Night travellers, you say? Uncle Ross said. "Night travellin'."
>
> He began to gum under his breath. It was a throaty sound. Soon, he began to sing in a voice that had all but forgotten such work.
>
> ***Night travellin', Night travellin'***
> ***I step my feet down strong,***
> ***I'm Night travellin'.***
>
> As he began to recall the words, his voice grew stronger and the deep tones of the song caught the rhythm of his hand upon the table.
>
> "That's a tune!" Toeboy said. "That's about night travellers!"
>
> "Slaves used to sing that," Uncle Ross said. "That was how they told one another in the fields that they planned to get away from slavery."
>
> "Are there other songs like that?" Toeboy wanted to know.
>
> Uncle Ross nodded. "There's the song about the drinking gourd, " he said. "Slaves called the Big Dipper the drinking gourd so folks wouldn't know what they were talking about. The Big Dipper stars lay in the north sky and the slave would follow them out to the south to Canada."
>
> "How does it go?" Toeboy asked.

"Well," Uncle Ross said, clearing his throat, "It tells about this man with a wooden leg. The slaves never saw him but they'd follow the mark of his wooden leg through forest trails and along riverbanks -

> ***"There's a river runs between two trees***
> ***There's another river on the other side***
> ***Left foot, peg foot, travel along,***
> ***Follow the drinking gourd,"***

"And there's still another one," Uncle Ross said. ***"I'm just a poor, wayfarin' stranger,"*** he sang, ***"travellin' through this land of woe."*** There's the 'Long John' song. Prison men used to sing that one. It told about Long John, how he was going to run.

> ***I'm Long John, I'm long gone***
> ***Like a turkey through the corn***
> ***With my long clothes on***
> ***I'm Long John, I'm long gone,***
> ***I'm long gone.*** (p. 82-83).

In addition to African-American heritage and dreams, culturally conscious books can expose preservice teachers to the linguistic differences, grammar, lexicon and style of different Black dialects. Identifying the features of the language will help preservice teachers bridge the language barrier that can exist between the white teacher and the African-American student. Furthermore, preservice teachers can come to enjoy and appreciate linguistic differences.

Also recurrent in the cultural awareness books are the use of names, nicknames, and terms of address which may help the preservice teacher reflect some understanding of the African-American naming tradition. Finally, through culturally conscious books, the preservice teacher can begin to discern African-American historical and cultural traditions, as well as religious and other belief systems.

Cultural heritage, dreams, language, traditions and beliefs all can be transmitted through children's literature, leaving preservice teachers with an awareness and understanding of the children they will teach. In addition to being better prepared to teach the African-American, preservice teachers will have read a large body of literature that will in turn be shared with their future students, no matter what their cultural heritage. A good story detailing distinctive cultural features will undoubtedly promote a culture's uniqueness as well as its universality. African-American children's literature can serve (1) to prepare monocultural preservice teachers for the African-American student, and (2) to in turn be used with students no matter what their cultural background, as a step towards their understandings of African-American culture. Preparing teachers through children's literature may result in the preparation of students to live in our "rapidly shrinking world."

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